

CHARLOTTE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED
LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD (LCB)
MEETING
November 7, 2024

Minutes of a regular meeting held in a hybrid format on November 7, 2024, utilizing TEAMS remotely and in-person at the Transit Facility, 545 Theresa Boulevard in Port Charlotte, FL 33954.

MEMBERS PRESENT IN-PERSON

Commissioner Ken Doherty, *Charlotte County Commissioner (LCB Chair)*
Stacy Booth, *FDOT, District One Modal Development Office*
Lynn Dohler, *Children-at-Risk Representative*
Lynda Faieta, *Public Education-School Transportation (alternate)*
Donna Fain, *Agency for Persons with Disabilities*
Angela Hemstreet, *Goodwill, Economically Disadvantaged Representative*
Carmen Henry, *Regional Workforce Development*
Matthew McGee, *Veterans' Affairs*
Maricela Morado, *Area Agency on Aging-Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY

Dottie Fulton, *Citizen Advocate-User (technical difficulties with phone-in)*
M. Suzanne Roberts, *Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic - Medical Community Representative (LCB Vice Chair)*
Joseph Sabatino, *Citizen Advocate*
Michael Stahler, *Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)*

ABSENT MEMBERS

Leigh Ann Bellamy, *Division of Blind Services*
Pamela Jordan, *Representative for Elderly Interests*
Tabitha Larrauri, *Department of Children & Families*
Cheryl Sytsma, *Disabled Interests Representative - excused*
Vacant, *Local Private-for-Profit Transportation Industry Representative*

STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Wendy Scott, *MPO Planner*
Sierra Ray Scott, *Administrative Support – STARR*
Shirley Ciampi, *Charlotte County Transit*
Heidi Maddox, *Charlotte County Transit*
Betty-Ann Sherer, *Charlotte County Transit*
Jill Turner, *Charlotte County Transit*
Eva Tomszak, *Charlotte County Fiscal*

OTHERS PRESENT REMOTELY

Lakshmi. N. Gurram, *MPO Principal Planner*

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

LCB Chair Ken Doherty called the regular LCB Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. An in-person quorum was present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

4. Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of Minutes: September 5, 2024

Maricela Morado made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Lynn Dohler seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

5. Approval of LCB Grievance Procedures

According to the Planning Grant Agreement, the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) requires that the LCB annually update and approve the Local Coordinating Board Grievance Procedures. These grievance procedures apply to customer service as provided on Charlotte County's Transportation Disadvantaged system, formerly known as Sunshine Ride. In the past, no grievances have ever gone forward to the LCB Grievance Board, but rather have been settled at the service provider or mediator levels. Several years ago, MPO staff reached out to County Human Services staff regarding their ongoing commitment to provide any future mediation assistance if required. The last response was favorable.

No substantive changes relating to the Grievance Procedures were made in the LCB Bylaws this year. At this time, staff is only recommending the following non-substantive changes to the LCB Grievance Procedures:

- document cover page, revise the date
- page 6, revise the signature page

Transit and MPO staff expect to complete a major review of Charlotte County Transit's grievance procedures in the coming year to meet the needs of all Charlotte County Transit passengers (both TD sponsored and general public paratransit riders of the transit system). The

timing of this effort will coincide with somewhat related Charlotte County Transit efforts to implement the new state law regarding the reporting of Adverse Incidents for Paratransit Riders. The CTD held a workshop on August 27, 2024 regarding this requirement, and the PowerPoint is found here: [20240827_adverse_incident_public_workshop_presentation.pptx \(live.com\)](https://live.com/20240827_adverse_incident_public_workshop_presentation.pptx)

Draft Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Grievance Procedures

Maricela Morado discussed a section of the Grievance Procedures on page two regarding duplicative language that needed review when staff is working on revisions next year.

Maricela Morado made a motion to approve the draft Charlotte County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board Grievance Procedures. LCB Chair Doherty seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

6. Quarterly Report

The quarterly report for July-September 2024 was presented by Charlotte County staff to describe recent activities of the Community Transportation Coordinator. It was an informational item.

Betty-Ann Sherer noted that there had been great improvement in the number of transit trips, increasing to approximately 83,000 trips annually for FY 23-24 (compared to the previous 59,000 FY 22-23 figure). Joe Sabatino inquired about the reason for Veterans Van issues, and it was noted that there were recent difficulties in obtaining an adequate number of volunteer drivers. Staff was working to develop a solution. The month of September was a slightly shorter month that reflected the impacts of a holiday and Hurricane Helene. Trips by purpose graphs revealed substantial increases over the four quarters in employment, medical and life-enhancing trips.

Figures for unmet trips had increased in August but declined in September. Often the reason for unmet trips was that requested times were not available. Transit staff had revisited staffing, routing and driver schedules including extending hours to address this issue.

Shirley Ciampi stated that Transit staff is now tracking compliments. Many of them center upon appreciation of the general transit services offered, praise for drivers and thanks for the new Transit mobile cell phone app that offers remote customer booking of trip reservations. Regarding service area complaints, Transit staff members are seeking to address customers' needs to book out-of-county trips. Safety concerns had declined. Upon review of camera footage and phone calls, two safety issues were found to be unsubstantiated. The other two were valid and addressed through driver training. In conjunction with the recent soft launch of the Transit mobile app, some customer inquiries were received regarding general information on how to use this new booking option.

Commissioner Doherty asked about efforts to address unmet employment trips through schedule adjustments. Heidi Maddox responded that Transit staff was analyzing the data starting in July

2024 and addressing these concerns with some corrections beginning the week of November 12, 2024. She was happy to report the availability of same day trip bookings which has been available only this past year. Betty-Ann Sherer stated that it was exciting to see on average 15-30 same day trip bookings. Commissioner Doherty believed that once word circulates about improved transit service, numbers will continue to climb. He characterized staff efforts as outstanding work. He encouraged Heidi Maddox to discuss with Administration the scheduling of a Board of County Commissioners (BCC) presentation. He noted that his BCC colleagues will be excited to learn more on Charlotte County Transit's program and recent improvements. Heidi Maddox anticipated such a presentation could occur early in the new year and promised to share the news with MPO staff to make LCB Members aware of the presentation schedule.

Maricela Morado described discussions at a recent Sarasota County LCB meeting regarding driver retention problems. Heidi Maddox reported that Charlotte County uses third party contractors. Only one driver had resigned due to hurricane issues. The rest had reported to work during the two recent hurricanes, and all had worked very hard.

Commissioner Doherty noted that during the recent hurricane over two thousand citizens had evacuated to Babcock Ranch with many evacuees being shuttled there by Transit. Shirley Ciampi stated that Transit had received numerous compliments regarding recent hurricane efforts, including some from the Punta Gorda Police Department for Hurricane Helene response. Commissioner Doherty noted that during Hurricane Milton when the evacuation zone went to yellow level, several County shelters had to be shut and evacuees then were transported to Babcock Ranch. He praised Transit's work in accomplishing this effort which included using some Public Works employees as temporary drivers.

7. Citizen Comments

No public comments were given.

8. Staff Comments

Wendy Scott gave the following report:

- (1) Thanks to everyone for participating in the LCB Meeting. Welcome to the newest LCB members: new Veteran's Services Interim Director Matthew McGee (who replaced David Till) and Kimberly Dextre as the new alternate from CareerSource Southwest Florida (now handling the Charlotte office)/currently Carmen Henry continues her dedicated LCB service representing that office. Thanks also to longtime member Joe Sabatino for agreeing to serve a new term on the LCB. The only LCB vacancy is the one for a representative for the Private-For-Profit industry.
- (2) The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) cancelled their September 25, 2024 Business Meeting to be held just after the combined FPTA/CTD Annual Conference & Expo due to the approach of Hurricane Helene. The storm threat hung over the conference and forced many attendees to alter their schedules and leave early in order to assume hurricane duties including Shirley Ciampi and Betty-Ann Sherer.

Going forward the Commission will conduct an orientation meeting on Wednesday, November 13, 1:00 – 5:00pm (Eastern Time), in Tallahassee, FL. The Governor recently appointed new members to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. The Commission will hold a meeting to provide these new commissioners with an orientation of their responsibilities and an overview of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. The meeting link and location have been posted to the [CTD Calendar page](#) on their website. The agenda and additional information was forwarded just prior to the meeting via email by Wendy Scott (in case anyone would like to listen to the orientation, which would be a wonderful learning opportunity).

- (3) Congratulations to CC Transit for dealing with two hurricanes over the course of a few weeks. Transit staff has received many kudos for their efforts like this one from Richard Arthur who wrote:

I want to give a big shout out to Heidi Maddox and the Transit team for their swift response in assisting South County residents who were affected by Helene which flooded their vehicles. These residents walked to the South County POD site, and thanks to the Transit team's quick action, we were able to provide much-needed support. Your help made a big difference, and we were even able to assist a few more walk-ups throughout the afternoon using Transit's services. Thank you again, Heidi and team!

- (4) The MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) activities are underway and future opportunities will exist for meeting attendees to participate. Happy holidays were wished to all.

Shirley Ciampi stated that a full launch of the Transit cell phone app would occur on November 12, 2024. It would be advertised on social media and through a press release. Interested individuals could download the app onto their phones. Shirley Ciampi would be happy to assist anyone interested in activating their account for app use.

Shirley Ciampi reported that following a soft launch of the new app in August 2024, positive feedback had already been received. It had proven very popular with adult children living outside of Charlotte County who were assisting elderly parents from afar with their travel arrangements. Sometimes, neighbors were also willing to assist with bookings. Transit staff was currently reaching out to homeowners associations to educate the public regarding the app.

Eva Tomszak inquired about same day trips and how much notice was required through the app or calling in to dispatch. Shirley Ciampi explained that if a reservation time slot was available on the app, the request would be taken (otherwise a warning would occur stating that the reservation could not be honored).

Maricela Morado liked the fact that adult children could assist their parents with booking. She inquired about the possibility of an agency booking multiple passenger (group) trips. Heidi Maddox responded that as with the Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic's use of the Transit portal, the Transit staff could grant access to community providers for booking multiple clients' trips.

Heidi Maddox named recent Transit staff changes: (1) Jill Turner would handle transit grants (following 12 years in Public Safety), (2) Laura Richards whose duties now include overseeing drivers and contracts, and (3) Tony Izzo who had arrived with twenty years in public transit in Arizona and would be overseeing dispatchers. Additionally, Transit had used three individuals who were hired at a post-Hurricane Helene County job fair. Two still were part of the STARR permanent temporary employee pool and were working full time as temporary dispatchers. Sierra Ray Scott described the program further.

Heidi Maddox stated that the Annual Operating Report (AOR) had been approved yesterday by CTD staff with one requested change. It centered upon separating numbers out for Hope Hospice trips. This was allowed as part of the motion made at the previous LCB Meeting when the AOR was approved. Heidi Maddox also mentioned that her staff had created a how-to-use brochure for the app, which she would forward to MPO staff for distribution to the LCB Members.

9. Member Comments

Stacy Booth gave the following FDOT report:

FDOT – Charlotte County LCB Meeting

Meeting date 11/07/2024

Time: 10:00a

Meeting location: 545 Theresa Blvd, Port Charlotte, FL 33954

Topics:

Agenda topic Federal Grants for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 24 / State Fiscal Year 2024/2025

FTA Section 5310, 5311, and 5339 applications – We are awaiting Work Program to program the funds for Charlotte County's 5310 Operating request which is for their Seniors and Disabilities Program, and we have completed the PTGA Contract for Charlotte County's Block funding. That contract is due to be fully executed June of 2025. The 5311 Rural Areas PTGA was sent to the Agency as a Draft on 10/30/24.

Agenda topic Federal Grants for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 25 / State Fiscal Year 2025/2026

FTA Section 5310, 5311, and 5339 applications – The due date to submit grant applications is Friday, December 13, 2024 by 5:00 pm.

Agenda topic Announcement

Mobility week was held from October 25, 2024 through November 2, 2024. It was a success and a lot of fun. We encourage all of our agencies to participate again next year.

Agenda topic Triennial Reviews

Round 3 of the FDOT triennial reviews began in 2024. We began with agencies that receive only FTA Section 5310 funding with the larger agencies to follow. There are currently 29 agencies to review throughout the District.

Reviews in Progress:

- None at this time

Upcoming Reviews:

- Charlotte County Triennial will begin again April 1, 2025.

Completed Reviews:

- None at this time

----- end FDOT Report -----

Betty-Ann Sherer noted that as part of Mobility Week, Transit staff again had participated in the Trunk or Treat Event. She thanked FDOT for providing a tremendous amount of transportation-themed items to distribute.

Angela Hemstreet expressed interest in obtaining the new cell phone app brochure and QR code. Staff committed to forwarding the information post-meeting.

Joe Sabatino stated that the two hurricanes had increased assistance requests, which were up by 25-50% on some days. Typically, they were financial in nature. He discussed available food pantries in Charlotte County. These often involved a partnership with the Harry Chapin Food Bank.

Dottie Fulton described the extreme hurricane damage suffered by her church located in downtown Punta Gorda at East Olympia and Wood Street. The entire facility needed to be gutted including the sanctuary, pews, fellowship hall and offices.

Suzanne Roberts thanked everyone for their support throughout the community. She was proud of the partnership between the Virginia B. Andes (VBA) Volunteer Community Clinic and Charlotte County Transit following expansion of a successful pilot project. She stated that the Clinic building and the Mobile Medical Clinic vehicle had weathered both the hurricanes well, but some individuals affiliated with the VBA had been impacted County-wide. As intended, the Mobile Clinic was utilized on the Friday after Hurricane Milton by partnering with the Red Cross at Babcock Ranch. It was used to help individuals needing care there, in Englewood and at the comfort sites. Additionally, the Mobile Clinic had a new site on Tuesdays at the Charlotte Behavioral Health location. It was also used in conjunction with Charlotte CARES (the old Homeless Coalition) twice a week. It was initially tricky operating in West County post-hurricane due to debris issues in Englewood, but the situation was slowly improving. She stated that next year, a Florida Association of Free and Charitable Clinics conference would be held at Sunseeker Resort, and the group of approximately 200 attendees would partner with Charlotte County Transit for event transportation to and from the VBA Clinic.

Maricela Morado reported for the Southwest Area Agency on Aging regarding free unbiased Medicare counseling offered during the open enrollment period and throughout the year. Help was available with evaluating various Medicare plans in light of many 2025 changes. Contact and event information is provided here: [Area Agency on Aging for SWFL – Area Agency on Aging for SWFL](#). She also discussed monthly financial literacy webinars offered through a partnership with Regions Bank. Ms. Morado noted that her organization would be receiving hurricane assistance funding to offer to eligible clients in the future. She also described seven-day meal boxes and Disaster Recovery Center meals and water (typically only on weekends) that were currently available.

LCB Chair Doherty provided LCB Members with Charlotte County hurricane damage information which was covered by four categories (based upon extent of damage):

- 1,030 structures effected (wind damage, etc.)
- 2,119 structures with minor flooding (less than a foot and a half of water)
- 2,510 structures with major flooding (over a foot and a half of water)
- 237 structures destroyed

Although the County had suffered hurricane wind events in the past, Hurricanes Helene and Milton were two major storm surge hurricanes experienced back-to-back. He noted that according to EOC meeting discussions, these events could result in individuals experiencing issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He emphasized the need for everyone to look out for one another. These weather events had been troubling, especially with the rapid intensification that had occurred. He noted that a great deal of work needed to be accomplished in places including Manasota Key, Charlotte Harbor, Charlotte Park adjacent to Punta Gorda, Grove City and the barrier islands. He stressed that there is a great team assembled, and the community will be okay. He described serious cash flow issues that the County endures with storms and the lengthy process the County encounters for obtaining FEMA reimbursements. He also described the heartbreaking situation in the North Carolina mountains following Hurricane Helene that he witnessed firsthand.

10. Adjournment (Next Meeting – January 9, 2024) at the Charlotte County Transit Facility, 545 Theresa Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33954)

The next LCB meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 9, 2025 at the Transit Facility located at 545 Theresa Blvd. in Port Charlotte, FL 33954. The Annual Public Meeting will be held just prior to the regular meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 a.m.